

USDAnews

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

Here's A Snapshot Of Anecdotes Covering The Last 50 Years At USDA

How About An "Alfred Packer Sirloin Burger"?

by Ron Hall
Office of Communications

The last days of 2006 will find more than a handful of USDA employees at their work places for the last time, checking their remaining voice mail messages, scanning their final e-mail messages, and beginning to box up their personal items—as they plan to become a part of the vaunted "retirement tsunami" at the end of the year in the U.S. Government.

They'll all, no doubt, take with them into retirement their own set of "office stories"—hopefully, mostly good ones, but presumably at least rich and colorful—as part of their own personal memories of their worklife at the Department.

Those employees who have worked at USDA for a half a century may recognize some of the memories of USDA held by **Nicholas Kominus**. Now an editor of a trade publication, he first started at USDA in 1952—when **Charles Brannan** was Secretary—as a summer information trainee in the [then] Bureau of Agricultural Economics at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC.

Now, that in itself isn't necessarily a "Stop The Presses!" moment; there are a lot of current USDA employees, both at

headquarters and field locations, who have logged 50-plus years of federal service and who are still working full-time for the Department. In fact, the Jan.-Feb. 2006 issue of the **USDA NEWS** carried a story about **Harold "Bruno" Mangum**, currently a communications coordinator with the Farm Service Agency's state office in Raleigh, N.C. He is considered to be the USDA employee with the longest years of full-time federal service currently employed at the Department. Mangum, who turned 90 years old on Dec. 18, 2006, began his career with USDA on June 9, 1936, when **Franklin Delano Roosevelt** was still in his first term as President and **Henry Agard Wallace** was Secretary—and as of December 9, 2006 he has logged 70 years and 6 months of full-time federal service.

But what distinguishes Kominus is that he has researched and then developed a presentation on the last 50-plus years of history at USDA. He refers to his lighthearted presentation as "An Unauthorized History of USDA—Or, Where The Bodies Are Buried."

For instance, he related that when **Bob Bergland** became Secretary in 1977, the food served in what is now the very popular third-floor buffet, in



"We sure do appreciate your careful and conscientious driving—during the 4,500 miles that it took to deliver our Capitol Christmas Tree here to the Nation's Capital," affirms Forest Service district ranger **Eduardo Olmedo** (left), as he presents tractor-trailer driver **Willie Perry** (right) with a cotton blanket that reads "Forest Service—Olympic National Forest." Perry was one of the drivers who helped transport the 2006 Capitol Christmas Tree, and associated paraphernalia, from its origin in the Olympic NF in Washington state to its destination in Washington, DC. They are both standing in the tractor-trailer which held the 3,000 ornaments and associated items that currently adorn the 5,000 lb., Pacific silver fir which now graces the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol. Note the story about the tree and the trip on page 4.—**PHOTO BY ANNA BROWN**

USDA's Whitten Building in Washington, DC, wasn't too highly regarded. "Despite the complaints, the General Services Administration did nothing," Kominus advised.

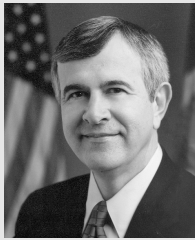
But some USDA staffers became aware of the fact that the Denver Press Club—in a tongue-in-cheek fashion—celebrated a man named **Alferd** [correct spelling] **Packer**. Packer was a guide in the late 1800s who led a party into the mountains of Colorado and they became snowbound. "In the process, they died, he lived—and it was widely thought that, in order to

survive, Packer had snacked on the remains of the rest of the party," Kominus recounted.

So, he said, the staffers got what was described as a "tasteful brass plaque" which read "The Alferd Packer Memorial Grill." "Then, during a formal ceremony," he added, "Secretary Bergland rechristened the dining room."

"Well, the head of GSA was furious," Kominus said, "and he and Mr. Bergland went eyeball to eyeball." Eventually, the plaque came down, the food improved—and the brass plaque now hangs

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Mike Johanns *Secretary of Agriculture*

Dear Fellow Employees, This is a very special time of year, one that is defined by new beginnings. It is worthwhile to take a moment to recognize all of the ways our USDA programs improve the lives of Americans. I'd like to focus this column on USDA programs that provide the chance for a better life and health through nutrition assistance to children, low-income families, and the elderly. USDA's food and nutrition programs touch the lives of more than one in five Americans each year.

Since 2001, we have added 6.6 million more low-income children and families to the Food Stamp program. The Food Stamp program now serves more than 26 million people every month, enabling them to put nutritious food on the table.

Access to the child nutrition programs has increased as well. Over the past five years, the number of low-income children who received a free or reduced-price lunch increased by more than one million kids and an additional 1.3 million children enjoyed breakfast at school. That means that today 30 million children receive a school lunch and nearly 10 million receive school breakfasts thanks to USDA programs and the great work of our partners.

The Women, Infants, and Children program now provides supplemental nutrition assistance to more than 8.2 million pregnant and nursing mothers, infants, and children.

Even with this impressive progress, outreach continues to be essen-

tial to ensure that every person eligible for nutrition assistance has access to it. That's where the strong partnership among government, food banks, and local faith and community-based organizations is vital. President **George W. Bush** has recognized the unique role faith and community-based groups can play to help us reach those in need. In 2001, he established an Office for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in the White House and 11 federal agencies, including USDA, to leverage their essential work in a "determined attack on need."

For our part, USDA awards grants to faith-based and community organizations to help alleviate hunger and build stronger communities. In addition, the groups raise awareness through information dissemination, pre-screening, application assistance, and community events. Programs are also customized to meet the needs of the community.

As a result, in many food pantries and soup kitchens across the country, when low-income individuals or families come in to pick up a food package or eat a warm meal, volunteers are also helping them learn how to enroll in the Food Stamp program or how to receive assistance through the WIC program.

These are just a few examples of the great work USDA employees do—in just one of our seven mission areas—to serve our fellow Americans. I continue to be enormously proud of the work of USDA employees each and every day here at home and around the world. Thank you. May this season of good will and of new beginnings bring you and your families comfort and joy. ■

50 Years At USDA...continued from pg. 1

at the "Reliable Source Bar" at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, where one can order an "Alfred [note different spelling] Packer Sirloin Burger" for \$8.00.

He related a second USDA historical anecdote about the National Agricultural Statistics Service. Before issuing one of its numerous crop reports, employees go into "lockup mode." According to **Steve Wiyatt**, Director of NASS's Statistics Division, this means there are guards at the door to prevent unauthorized entry *and* exit, the phones are disconnected, and the window blinds are closed and sealed. "Back in 1905 an employee tipped off someone on the outside about the size of the cotton crop by adjusting the blinds," he advised. "That led to the implementation of the lockup soon thereafter." In addition, for about a 12-hour period, when the crop report is being finalized, employees are literally locked into one corridor of USDA's South Building in Washington, DC until the report is released.

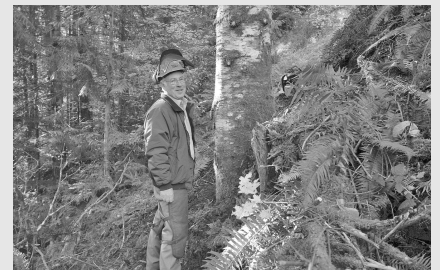
One morning sometime in the late 1940s, prior to lockup an employee from another office wandered into that corridor to use the restroom. "But when she wanted to leave, the guards wouldn't let her out—not until 3 p.m. that day, which was the time of the release of the latest crop report," Kominus recounted.

"Well, it had been her habit to call her mother every morning when she arrived at work," he noted. "So now she couldn't leave and she couldn't phone. After awhile her mother panicked, and called the hospitals and the police about her missing daughter. She nearly had a nervous breakdown. But her daughter *did* get out—at 3 p.m.—and *did* call her mom."

"While the likelihood of that occurring now is very remote," Wiyatt advised, "NASS has since developed a procedure in case emergencies arise. Specifically, one particular individual, who is *not* involved in preparing the crop report, is authorized to communicate with the guard at the door, in order to notify an employee's supervisor that the employee will have to remain in lockup with us for awhile."

A third USDA historical anecdote revolves around the late 1940s and early 1950s when U.S. Sen. **Joseph McCarthy** began accusing a lot of employees in the federal government of being Communists. At that time an information officer named **John Baker** worked in the Chicago Information Office of the Agricultural Marketing Service.

"So the security officer at the Department sent *that* John Baker a letter questioning some statements he had made," Kominus said. "The problem was that the security offi-



While an overhead crane uses a cable to stabilize the tree, recently retired FS forest technician **Phil Zembas** takes a deep breath before beginning to cut the 37-year-old, 5,000 lb., 69-foot-tall Pacific silver fir that is about to become this year's Capitol Christmas Tree. Note the story on page 4.—**PHOTO BY NORM TENNEFOSS**

cer sent the letter to the wrong John Baker. There was another **John Baker** at USDA, a high-ranking official, who had made the statements in question."

But, instead of quaking in his boots—which would have been an understandable reaction, given the fear and tension during what was the "Era of McCarthyism" in American history—AMS's John Baker instead wrote a letter back that stated he 'didn't remember' making the statements attributed to him—since he hadn't made them.

"But," Kominus recounted, "Baker then
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Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

*International events dominated the past two months as Secretary **Mike Johanns** traveled to India to encourage that country to lead other developing nations toward trade liberalization. The Doha Development Round talks are at a standstill and will remain so unless India and other developing nations help get the talks back on track.*

In December South Korea rejected the third shipment of U.S. beef sent since the market was declared open on Sept. 11, 2006. USDA began disbarment proceedings against the Australian Wheat Board Limited after an investigation by the Australian government determined AWB Limited participated in illegal activities in the United Nations Oil-for-Food program. Disbarment, if achieved, prevents AWB Limited from future participation in USDA export credit programs.

*Secretary Johanns also welcomed on board Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services **Mark Keenum** who was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in December and he announced that a team of U.S. universities will receive \$5.3 million to strengthen agricultural extension and training at Iraqi universities.*

India: During a visit to India in November, Secretary Johanns stressed the importance of trade as an economic development engine in a speech to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. "Look at the tremendous growth in China and other Southeast Asian countries in the last ten years and you can easily see the benefits of opening markets to trade," he said. As further proof of the benefits of free trade, Johanns cited a study by the

Institute for International Economics and the Center for Global Development: "They found that a move toward global free trade could lift 500 million people out of poverty, increase the income of developing nations by about \$200 billion annually, and cut global poverty by 25 percent over 15 years."

South Korea: In a statement issued Dec. 6, Secretary Johanns expressed great disappointment with South Korea's decision to reject all three shipments of U.S. beef delivered since September. "The rejection clearly illustrates the South Korean officials are determined to find an excuse to reject all beef products from the U.S. There is absolutely no food safety issue with any one of these shipments. I find it difficult to accept that bone fragments the size of one half of a grain of rice were found through visual inspection of ten metric tons of beef, as is South Korea's claim regarding the third shipment, despite the fact that it went through unusually rigorous inspection by the U.S. exporter before it was shipped. I can only conclude that these actions are designed to restrict beef trade." Talks with South Korea to make beef trade commercially viable are expected to resume in the New Year.

Australian Wheat Board Limited: Secretary Johanns announced the immediate suspension and proposed debarment of AWB Limited and its affiliates from participating in U.S. government programs and contracting with the U.S. government. The action follows an investigation by the Australian government, which revealed AWB Limited engaged in bribery, kickbacks, and similar behavior resulting in payments to the **Saddam Hussein** regime in Iraq.



Assistant Secretary for Administration **Boyd Rutherford** (left), Suitland (Md.) Elementary School Guidance Counselor **Barbara Solomon** (center), and Coats for Kids Foundation President **Paul Darby** are surrounded by racks full of winter overcoats. The coats—all new—were collected as part of a recent USDA effort, in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, to donate new coats for needy schoolkids at an area elementary school. According to **Marian Romero**, a contract services supervisor in the Office of Operations, USDA employees donated 224 coats during this initiative.—**PHOTO BY KEN HAMMOND**

Iraq Revitalization: A team of U.S. universities was awarded \$5.3 million to continue helping Iraq rebuild its agricultural sector by strengthening agricultural extension and training at Iraqi universities. The money will be used to train Iraqi nationals in management, production, and marketing related to small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises. The production of crops in an arid climate, livestock production and animal health, and water resources management and irrigation technology will also be addressed. The Texas Cooperative Extension folks at Texas A&M University will lead a team that includes four other universities: Washington State University, Utah State University, University of California at Davis, and New Mexico State University. They plan to involve Prairie View A&M University, a historically black land-grant institution, and Dine College, a tribal college. The partnering Iraqi universities will be selected in the coming months.

U.S.-Panama Free Trade Agreement: Under this agreement more than half of all current U.S. farm exports to Panama will become duty-free immediately, including high quality beef, mechanically deboned chicken, turkey, and pork variety meats, to name a few. Most significant for U.S. beef and poultry producers, Panama has agreed to revise its sanitary and phytosanitary regulations to recognize as equivalent the U.S. food safety inspection system for meat, poultry, and processed food products. This will also contribute to increased trade.

83rd Annual Outlook Forum: USDA's annual Outlook Conference, titled "Agriculture at the Crossroads: Energy, Farm & Rural Policy," will focus on bioenergy and its implications for agriculture. The conference will be held March 1-2, 2007 at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel in Arlington, Va. To see program details and to register go to www.usda.gov/oce/forum.

—**PATRICIA KLINTBERG**

Employees *make these things happen*

Farm And Foreign Agricultural Services

FSA 'Early Responders' In Florida Expand Their Approach To Disasters

Unlike 2004 and 2005, this year's just-ended hurricane season was kind to Florida. Nonetheless, Farm Service Agency employees in that state helped to initiate a more expansive approach to preparing for natural or agricultural disasters in the future.

Specifically, FSA employees have initiated three-day "Early Responder" training sessions to develop life-saving and disaster response skills. Not only do they get certified in first-aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation, they also learn how to navigate the many logistics involved in assessing damages, securing life and property, and coordinating emergency assistance after a natural disaster.

The sessions are held at the State Emergency Operations Center in Tallahassee, as part of FSA's ongoing partnership through the State Agricultural Response Team to assist in emergency and agricultural disaster response efforts. The first session was held in August 2006.

"Florida is the first state to have a group whose ultimate goal and mission is to be able to address—and then respond to—any type of natural disaster and animal AND agricultural disaster incident," said **Tim Manning**, the Homeland Security and Emergency Operations Coordinator for FSA in Florida.

"Florida aggressively worked on preparation and response to agricultural events that might impact the state's \$9 billion agricultural industry—not because we want to, but because we've had to, due to all the storms we've had in the last couple of years," he noted.

Historically, FSA employees have used damage assessment reports to capture crop information during times of drought, freeze, hail, and excessive moisture.

"The damage estimates have a real direct impact on the agricultural market, and our job is to do the best we can to honestly assess the damage losses," explained **Kevin Kelley**,

FSA State Executive Director for Florida.

However, to improve on local disaster response efforts, in 2004 Florida FSA helped form a State Agricultural Response Team, of which FSA First Responders are a vital part. "Yes, and we've been planning this special training for three years," quipped Manning. "But every time we'd schedule it, we were hit by some storm, and had to postpone it."

The Florida State Agricultural Response Team is a multi-agency coordinated group dedicated to disaster recovery preparedness, planning response, and recovery efforts for animal and agriculture sectors in the state.

Special Agents-in-Charge from the USDA Office of Inspector General's Investigations Division in Gainesville, Fla., have also partnered with FSA to assist with these goals. During the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons FSA assembled a 'Jump Team' of 'Early Responders' and deployed to those impacted areas. OIG staffers aided FSA employees in providing needed assistance to those FSA employees who were impacted by the storms and who could not complete their assigned duties due to their own personal losses.

Some of the risks Early Responders face when out in the field during a disaster response include safety issues such as downed power lines, flooding, sinkholes, losing control while driving, wild animals, snakes, and stray dogs. Security issues to be aware of include theft of equipment or supplies and assaults upon responders.

"If you're out on an emergency response, most people are going to think you're wonderful," said **Tom Ackerman**, the Gainesville-based Assistant Special Agent-In Charge for OIG Investigations in OIG's Southeast Region. "But some people will be anti-government, and some of them will try to hurt you."

Florida FSA Early Responders are deployed when a county is impacted to the point where employees in the disaster area have personal

losses. According to **Marcinda Wolthuis**, FSA County Executive Director for Pasco and Hernando Counties, some of their tasks include locating missing FSA employees and ensuring the safety of affected employees, checking the condition of affected employees' homes and FSA county office facilities and equipment, and checking the condition of FSA aerial photography maps and producer records.

FSA Early Responders not only received needed training in first aid and cardiovascular pulmonary resuscitation (CPR), they also learned new technological skills: (1) how to calibrate digital cameras to match Global Positioning System units in order that photos taken onsite can be geo-referenced on an "orthoimagery," or "layered," map, (2) preserving evidence of criminal or terrorism-oriented activities, and (3) preparing initial assessment reports and, subsequently, more detailed damage assessment reports.

"We want to be able to show and quantify where the crop loss was," said Gainesville-based FSA geographic information specialist **Ed Aschliman**.

"We're basically the eyes and ears to get information relayed back to our FSA state office," added Wolthuis.

—**CYNTHIA PORTALATIN**



Joy Llossas, FSA County Executive Director for Hendry, Collier, and Glades Counties, Fla., inspects a citrus grove in Glades County for hurricane-caused damage to the orange crop.—**PHOTO BY MARCINDA WOLTHUIS**

Natural Resources And Environment

Seasonal Tree From Forest Service Again Graces U.S. Capitol

For the first time Washington state has provided this year's Capitol Christmas Tree—which is now lit and ready for viewing on the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol, facing toward the Washington Monument in Washington, DC.

This year's tree, which came from the Olympic National Forest in western Washington state, is a 37-year-old, 5,000-lb., Pacific silver fir. "It was originally 69 feet tall when it was found in the forest," explained **Karl Denison**, public affairs officer for the Olympic NF. "Now it's set in the ground with 61 feet exposed."

The Capitol Christmas Tree is provided each year by one of the nation's 155 national forests.

This is the 35th Capitol Christmas Tree that has been provided to Congress by the Forest Service from a national forest, according to **Beverly Carroll**, an FS program analyst and national coordinator for the

Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*



Margo McKay is the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.

Before joining USDA, from August 1992 until her confirmation for this position by the U.S. Senate McKay served as Associate General Counsel for the Federal National Mortgage Association ("Fannie Mae"). She was an Administrative Judge for the District of Columbia from 1991-92, where she held hearings on, and rendered decisions on, claims of employment discrimination by employees of the government of the District of Columbia. From 1983-91 she served as the executive assistant to the Vice Chair of the Merit Systems Protection Board.

From 1982-83 McKay served as the Managing Attorney of the Alexandria, Va., branch of Legal Services of Northern Virginia, a

private, non-profit law firm. She worked in private practice in Seoul, South Korea, from 1978-81, both as a criminal defense attorney in military courts martial and as an attorney handling administrative employment complaints before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. She began her legal career in 1975 with the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice, where she prosecuted cases under all civil rights statutes, including Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. She began her federal career as a management intern with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, DC, and simultaneously as a federal personnel intern sponsored by the [then] Civil Service Commission.

Vernon Parker, the previous Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, now heads up a Phoenix, Ariz.-based consulting firm that specializes in diversity,

equal employment opportunity, and human resources matters. ■



Marc Kesselman is USDA's General Counsel.

Before joining USDA, from October 2004 until his confirmation for this position by the U.S. Senate Kesselman served as the Deputy General Counsel at the Office of Management and Budget. He was OMB's Associate General Counsel from November 2003 to October 2004. While at OMB he handled a wide range of regulatory and budgetary matters, mediated interagency disputes, addressed significant matters on the civil litigation docket of the U.S. Department of Justice, formulated Presidential Executive Orders, and developed and implemented legal policy initiatives. Earlier during 2003 he served as Senior Coun-

sel in the Office of Legal Policy at DOJ. From 2000-2003 he was a trial attorney in the Federal Programs Branch at DOJ, representing the United States against constitutional challenges to federal statutes and attacks on the legality of government policies and programs.

From 1997-2000 Kesselman worked as an attorney at the Washington, DC law firm of Ropes & Gray, focusing on litigation, employment law, intellectual property, and white collar defense. He was a law clerk for **Julia Gibbons**, [then] the Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee, in Memphis, from 1996-97.

Nancy Bryson, USDA's previous General Counsel, is now a partner at the Washington, DC office of the Venable law firm, where she is heading its food and agriculture law practice. ■

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Capitol Christmas Tree. "They are provided with the support of state agencies and officials, for use as the Capitol Tree."

This particular tree was initially discovered by **Jana Shinn**, an FS timber sale officer on the Olympic NE. She discovered it on the Olympic NF's Pacific Ranger District.

"Where I found it is one of the wettest spots in the continental U.S.," she said. "It commonly gets over 200 inches of rain a year."

"November 1 was the day we cut the tree," added **Eduardo Olmedo**, an FS district ranger on the Olympic NE. "It was a beautiful sunny day. Then the next day it started pouring. And it kept raining for two solid weeks, dumping 35 inches of rain during that time."

"Plus," he continued, "five days after we hauled the tree out of the national forest, the gravel road we had driven on washed out. So if we hadn't moved the tree when we did, we would have needed to use a chopper to lift the tree out—and the weather situation wouldn't even have permitted that."

"So WHEW, I think we dodged a major bullet in all this," he quipped.

The tree was prepared for transporting to Washington, DC, on a 102-foot-long tractor-trailer. "And, during the trek to DC, we encountered some interesting highway turns," recounted **Ron Malamphy**, an FS law enforcement officer on the Gifford Pinchot NF in Washington state. "It was especially tricky when we hit some 90-degree road turns going through some towns on the route, and when we hit some radius turns driving onto some on-ramps."

The Capitol Christmas Tree arrived in Washington, DC on November 27. Denison added that most of the tree's journey and related activities were funded through sponsors and donations.

Aleta Eng, FS's partnership coordinator on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF in Washington state, said that this year's tree is decorated with over 3,000 ornaments, handcrafted by students from throughout the state of Washington.

Carroll said that the Capitol Christmas Tree—also called the "People's Tree"—is not to be confused with the National Christmas Tree, which grows on the Ellipse behind the White House.



FS's **Ron Malamphy** (center) is flanked by two U.S. Air Force personnel from Warren AFB in Cheyenne, Wyo., as they get ready to begin an overnight vigil to protect the 2006 Capitol Christmas Tree, on the tractor trailer behind them, from 'overenthusiastic' visitors who might be tempted to grab tree parts as souvenirs.—**PHOTO BY EDUARDO OLMEDO**

The 2006 Capitol Christmas Tree was formally lit on December 6. "This year," noted **Sara Savage**, FS's fire prevention officer on the Olympic NE, "the lights on the tree are 'Light-Emitting Diode' or 'LED' lights. Those 10,000-plus lights cost a total of about one dollar a day in electricity, versus about thirty dollars a day using that many traditional lights."

The Capitol Christmas Tree will be lit each evening through January 1, 2007.

—**RON HALL**



Bill Puckett is the Deputy Chief for Soil Survey and Resource Assessment in the

Natural Resources Conservation Service.

From July 2004 until his selection for this position Puckett served as Director of NRCS's East National Technology Support Center in Greensboro, N.C. He was Director of the agency's Soil Quality Institute in Auburn, Ala., from 2001-04. From 1999-2001 Puckett worked as a major land resource area leader for soil survey for NRCS in Auburn.

Puckett was a soil scientist for the agency's Oversight and Evaluations Staff in Atlanta from 1997-99. From 1995-97 he worked as an operations manager in NRCS's [then] South Central Regional Office in Ft. Worth, Texas. He served as NRCS's Assistant State Conservationist for Operations for Oklahoma, based in Stillwater, from 1993-95, after having been the agency's state soil scientist in Oklahoma from 1991-93. He began his career with NRCS in 1983 as a field soil scientist in Bushnell, Fla.

Maury Mausbach, the previous Deputy Chief for Soil Survey and Resource Assessment in

NRCS, retired from that position following 37 years of service with NRCS. ■



Here's a cartoonist who fights fire with the flair of a colored marker—and

schoolkids love it.

Jimmie Turner is the Forest Service fire prevention specialist for the Walla Walla Ranger District in the Umatilla National Forest, which covers northeast Oregon and southeast Washington state. But to kids in elementary schools around Walla Walla,

Wash., he's known as the cartoonist who created—and draws—**Digger Bear**, **Ember**, **Coaly**, **Aussie**, and **S.J.**, among others.

That's because he uses the drawings of chatty forest animals to engage those students when he makes educational appearances in their schools to talk about forest fires, including basic fire prevention, the characteristics of wildland fires, and safe fire practices both in the woods and in one's own home.

Digger Bear is a firefighting bear. S.J., a smokejumper bear, and Aussie, a firefighting kangaroo from Australia, are also part *continued on pg. 7...*

PROFILE PLUS *More About: W. Kirk Miller*



W. Kirk Miller is the Associate Administrator of the Foreign Agricultural Service. He is also USDA's General Sales Manager and a Vice President of the Commodity Credit Corporation.

All those titles mean he's the guy who oversees our food aid donations to private voluntary organizations and the World Food Program; our export credit guarantee programs that partially finance sales of U.S. agricultural commodities to foreign customers; and our programs that help U.S. commodity organizations and companies promote U.S. products overseas. This portfolio of programs has a value of approximately \$6 billion per year.

"Originally the General Sales Manager was established to do what the name implies: sell surplus commodities held by the government to markets outside the U.S.," Miller said. Today, the job of managing the sale of surpluses is almost nonexistent. He said, "we have minimal stockpiles because over the years U.S. farm programs have been modified to avoid the acquisition of surplus commodities."

Miller hails from a family farm located in the north central part of Ohio. It is four miles away from the closest town, Richwood, which has fewer than 1,000 people. Still, the early life experiences—4-H, raising hogs and cattle on a diversified grain operation—kindled Miller's interests in marketing and legislative activities. He earned an undergraduate degree in agricultural economics from The Ohio State University and later, an M.A. in international transactions from George Mason University in Virginia.

Miller has worked at the Ohio and American Farm Bureau Federation on marketing, regulatory, and legislative matters. He headed the American Malting Barley Association and the Barley and Malt Institute. He's also the former Administrator of USDA's [then] Federal Grain Inspection Service during the **Reagan** administration.

Among all the interesting USDA programs Miller oversees, he says those providing a school lunch to children in impoverished nations is among the most gratifying. "The United States is the largest contributor of food aid in the world, and American farmers are very supportive of donations of their abundant production to needy persons not only here in the U.S. but elsewhere in the world," Miller said.

Under the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, USDA provides commodities and financial and technical assistance to countries that will send children to school so they can receive a meal along with their education. Contributing to a healthy, literate workforce is expected to create prosperity, economic development, and a better quality of life. The allure of a school lunch has caused more children to attend school in every country where the program operates. "In Moldova [formerly part of the Soviet Union] we have fed 70 to 80 percent of children below 10 years of age," Miller said.

The McGovern-Dole program, named for former Senators **George McGovern** (D-SD) and **Bob Dole** (R-KS), long-time champions of USDA feeding programs, is not just about delivering food. "Our goal is to start the program and demonstrate favorable results so that the local community and government understand the importance of continuing the program when U.S. funding ends," Miller said.

"We are also looking at the special nutrition needs of nursing mothers, children, and HIV/AIDS patients to make sure we deliver the right product mix," Miller said. Manufacturers have responded by creating new products. One U.S. dairy company, at its own expense, developed a variety of food bars made with a high percentage of nonfat dry milk. Now it's working on packaging. "Once the nutrient problem was solved, the firm needed to develop packaging that could withstand airdropping into areas like Darfur where there is severe chronic hunger," he said.

Miller is also proud of his role in market promotion. In FY 2007, the U.S. is expected to set its fourth straight record year of agricultural exports at \$77 billion.

Last Book Read: *Blink* by **Malcolm Gladwell**.

Last Movie Seen: *Dances with Wolves*.

Hobbies: Golf, hiking, working in the yard.

Favorite Weekend Breakfast: Waffles.

Priorities In The Months Ahead: "We have recently reorganized FAS in order to respond more nimbly to issues that come before us. For example, we now have an Office of Science and Technical Affairs. They are organized to work with APHIS and ARS to resolve barriers to U.S. exports that have little basis in science. I want to ensure the reorganization proceeds smoothly and provides better service."

—**PATRICIA KLINTBERG**

of Digger's team of firefighting professionals.

Coaly is a Jack Russell terrier on the team who is an exchange student from a city fire department. Coaly wears a classic firefighter's wide-brimmed hat, like city firefighters—but decidedly *unlike* fighters of wildland fires. "This means," Turner explained, "that Coaly will be out in the woods looking for a fire hydrant, while the other cartoon characters are busy doing things like digging trenches and carrying five-gallon backpack water pumps to fight a fire in the woods."

A fifth character is Ember, who is Digger's sister and who is used to fighting wildland fires—but who is also an exchange student who works for a fire company in an urban environment. "So," Turner said, "Ember may find herself trying to dig a trench across a city street in order to fight a city fire."

"In other words," noted **Joani**

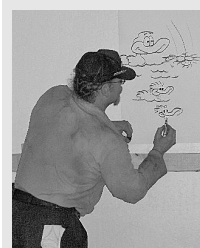
Bosworth, the Forest Service public affairs officer on the Umatilla NF, "part of Jimmie's presentation is to expose the schoolkids to the differences between fires in a forest and

fires in a city, and how those differences may affect their own lives."

"I *could* drone on in the classroom about, say, 'riparian habitat'—and the students would be bored in five minutes," Turner added. "But my comic characters—which I often draw on the spot for 'em—personalize things for the kids."

For example, he'll use his cartoons to explain that, when fighting a fire in the woods, firefighters generally *don't* rescue animals, but rather count on them to either run away from a fire or burrow underground for protection. For instance, in a recent comic strip Turner had Coaly climb a tree to rescue a porcupine during a wildland fire. In the process Coaly got himself stuck full of porcupine quills. Digger Bear subsequently explained to Coaly that this was one of the reasons animals are better left to fend for themselves during a wildland fire.

As another example, as part of Turner's artistic style he'll use a colored marker to draw a duck. Then he'll say, "What do you



"I add a few lines right here, in colored marker—and now I've added a mouth to this duck in the woods during a wildland fire," affirms FS's **Jimmie Turner**.—**PHOTO BY RICK HARTIGAN**

think happens to the duck when there's a fire?"

"This relates the concepts of 'habitat'—specifically, a fire threat to habitat—to the reality of a kid's own home," he pointed out. "And I can watch as even five-year-olds begin to grasp the seriousness of the fire prevention message."

"I'll then ask if they have little brothers or sisters at home," he noted. "Then I'll say that 'It's up to you to tell the little kids about this.'"

"They love that—because they don't get to be called 'big kids' that often!" ■

—**KATHY BOWMAN**

50 Years At USDA...continued from pg. 2

wrote that he thought he had spent four years as a U.S. Marine, fighting in the Pacific during World War II, to defend the right of free speech." Baker then mentioned in his letter that before he went off to war he had ridden in a carpool with **Milton Eisenhower**, who at the time was USDA's Director of Information. "Baker then noted in his letter that from time to time 'Milton's brother' rode with them," Kominus said. "He then ended the letter by writing, 'I wonder whatever happened to Milton's brother?'" 'Milton's brother' **Dwight David 'Ike' Eisenhower** was living in the White House at the time of Baker's letter.

Baker mailed his letter to the USDA security officer—but, Kominus said, he also sent copies to *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Chicago Tribune*—all of which then carried articles referring to, and quoting from, Baker's letter.

"As a result," Kominus reported, "the security officer was transferred to a USDA assignment in Alaska. And that ended up being one of the first nails in McCarthy's coffin."

A fourth USDA historical anecdote concerns an agricultural official from the Yugoslavian government who visited USDA headquarters in the mid-1950s. Kominus gave him a two-week tour of the Department. "The first thing the official asked me," Kominus recounted, "was 'Where can I get bluejeans and **Elvis Presley** records for my daughter?'"

A few days later the official asked Kominus how USDA was able to get its

employees to come to work on time—and then actually stay all day at work. "I told him that our work schedule was from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. He replied that in Yugoslavia people don't maintain a schedule. I asked him to forgive me as I then mentioned that I thought that with [Yugoslav Leader **Josip Broz**] **Tito** in command, that wouldn't be a problem. He replied that they'd crack down every now and then, but then people would go back to their old habits."

Finally, Kominus said that a perennial issue which occasionally surfaced during his tenure at USDA—and which bubbles up at times today—concerns the types and numbers of publications which USDA generates for the public, whether from headquarters or from field locations.

"It's an easy potshot to make," he observed, "when someone wants to criticize USDA for publishing too many of what were called in my day 'farmer bulletins'."

"But critics—and anyone else—would be wise to remember that the law which created the Department in 1862 stated that 'the general designs and duties of which [the Department] shall be to acquire and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the most general and comprehensive sense of that word...'"

"Any employee who has the good fortune of working at USDA," Kominus underscored, "will develop his or her own stories—rich and colorful—of their experiences. Then, over the years, those stories can be added to the archives of the history of USDA." ■

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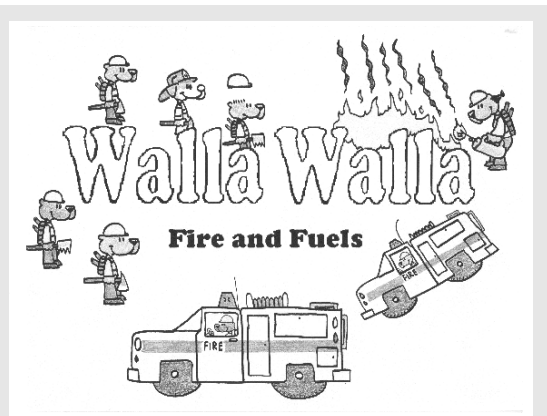
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The gang's mostly all here—including **Digger Bear** (top, far left), **Coaly** (top, second from left), and **Ember** (top, far right)—as they get ready to educate area schoolkids about forest fires and their prevention. These cartoon characters are the creation of **Jimmye Turner**, a Forest Service fire prevention specialist on the Umatilla National Forest in the northwestern U.S. They're part of his unique approach, designed to personalize this issue for the elementary school students—at a level that they can understand and relate to. Note **Kathy Bowman's** story on page 6.—ILLUSTRATION BY **JIMMYE TURNER**



Help Us Find Mario Zamora

Missing: 7-14-2006 From: **Bronx, NY**
D.O.B. 11-11-1994 Sex: **Male**
Hair: **Black** Eyes: **Brown**
Height: **4 ft. 4 in.** Weight: **150 lbs.**

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